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Technical cooperation among developing countries

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1 - 4	2
I. PROGRESS MADE AS REPORTED TO THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (TCDC/8/2) AND ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN THEREAFTER	5 - 58	2
A. Highlights of the report (1991-1992)	5 - 11	2
B. Activities undertaken since the adoption of Council resolution 1992/41	12 - 58	3
1. Developing countries	15 - 25	4
2. Organizations and agencies of the United Nations system (other than UNDP)	26 - 52	6
3. United Nations Development Programme	53 - 58	11
II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	59 - 60	12

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/41 on technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

2. In adopting that resolution in July 1992 and acknowledging progress in that area, the Council noted that TCDC had nevertheless continued to be applied only marginally in the implementation of programmes and projects, and called on all parties to support and give first consideration to the use of TCDC modality. It invited all countries and the United Nations development system to review their existing policies and procedures in order to improve the environment for TCDC and facilitate its widespread use.

3. While a longer reporting period than the one and a half years that have elapsed since the adoption of Council resolution 1992/41 would have permitted a better assessment of initiatives undertaken by Governments and the United Nations system to implement the wide range of activities envisaged, many encouraging trends in the implementation of TCDC activities have continued and gathered momentum, particularly since 1991. Those trends were reported to the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries at its eighth session, 25-28 May 1993.

4. Some of the information made available to the High-level Committee in a report entitled "Review of progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and decisions of the High-level Committee" (TCDC/8/2) also covers the period under review and is relevant to the review of the implementation of Council resolution 1992/41. Highlights of that report are therefore included in the present report (the full report is available on request).

I. PROGRESS MADE AS REPORTED TO THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (TCDC/8/2) AND ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN THEREAFTER

A. Highlights of the report (1991-1992)

5. In November 1992, the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries sent out improved questionnaires to obtain information on TCDC activities carried out during 1991-1992 by Governments and organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. Responses were received from 42 developing countries, 8 developed countries and 14 organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. The above-mentioned report (TCDC/8/2) provided an analysis of that information.

6. The report indicated that according to the information received from the developing countries on activities using the TCDC modality, TCDC activities had significantly increased, as was reflected in the number of experts and trainees exchanged, joint studies and technical or scientific workshops carried out, networking arrangements set up and bilateral agreements concluded.

7. Intense activities were reported during 1991-1992, with more than 5,300 trainees exchanged among developing countries. More than 3,750 experts had also been exchanged, compared to some 700 experts during the previous reporting period. In addition, 15 countries had participated in 328 technical and scientific workshops. Eight countries had carried out jointly with other developing countries 95 joint studies and researches on development issues of common interest.

8. The responding agencies and organizations of the United Nations system also reported that they had been increasingly attaching a high priority to TCDC. Promotional and operational activities supported by or through the system had increased.

9. Eight developed countries responded to the questionnaire and expressed their recognition of the importance of TCDC in international cooperation, and some stated that they had already started to incorporate it in their development policy.

10. The report also noted some constraints in utilizing the TCDC modality, including the limited effectiveness of national focal points, the lack of financial resources and the need for a stronger commitment and greater efforts to use/apply the modality.

11. The report concluded that (a) strengthening the national focal points and coordination mechanism had emerged as one of the major recommendations of developing countries; and (b) greater efforts and willingness were needed to provide the main inputs required by, inter alia, increasing the use of the Indicative Planning Figures, increasing the allocations from national treasuries and ensuring a greater flexibility on the part of donors in the use of bilateral assistance to carry out activities implemented through TCDC.

B. Activities undertaken since the adoption of Council resolution 1992/41

12. In preparing the present report, the Special Unit for TCDC requested from Governments and from the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system information concerning (a) projects and programmes that had been launched since July 1992 and which utilized TCDC; (b) national policy changes or refinement that had occurred relating to TCDC; (c) the use of expertise and facilities from the developing countries; and (d) the strengthening of TCDC national focal points. Responses were received from 72 Governments through UNDP field offices and from 18 organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. Nine countries and two agencies reported no significant activities.

13. Some important initiatives have been undertaken both by Governments and by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. While the information provided to the Special Unit for TCDC has not been as comprehensive as might have been hoped, some common trends have been discerned and are summarized below.

14. It is evident that the resolution has been widely disseminated and that its implications are better appreciated by both the developing countries and the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. The extensive promotional work undertaken to make the decision known has undoubtedly contributed to that result.

1. Developing countries

Promotional activities

15. Many countries expressed a renewed commitment to and enthusiasm for increasing the use of the TCDC modality to undertake development activities. They reported organizing and/or participating in regional sensitization programmes, international symposia and national workshops on the concept and application of TCDC. Some have initiated or completed the preparation of compendia on capacities and needs in various sectors, while others have taken part in capacities-matching exercises.

16. A number of countries also reported participating in various regional focal points meetings during the review period in Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Venezuela. The meetings of TCDC focal points have been of great assistance in articulating and refining the role and functions of the TCDC national focal points. National focal point and sensitization workshops on the TCDC modality were held in 1993 in several countries including Libya (February), Nigeria (September) and Zambia (October). Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone are planning to hold similar workshops. Morocco hosted an expert group meeting to review TCDC in February 1993.

17. Bolivia has completed a compendia of capacities and needs, Lesotho and Libya are each in the process of preparing one and Egypt is updating an earlier version. Morocco is preparing to host a capacities-/needs-matching exercise in September 1994.

Operational activities

18. According to the information received from the developing countries, it is clear that many of them have undertaken TCDC operational activities during the period under review. They have exchanged expert services, provided and/or received training, participated in numerous technical workshops and skills transfer seminars and signed cooperative agreements.

19. At least 11 umbrella projects to finance TCDC activities have been approved or initiated during the reporting period by the developing countries, including Argentina, Cape Verde, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Morocco, the Republic of Moldova, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Tunisia, Sri Lanka and Ukraine. Those projects cover such areas as water supply and sanitation, basic education, administrative reforms, civil air transport, telecommunications, desertification control and drug control.

20. With regard to training, Malaysia, for instance, provided 23 short-term specialized training courses during 1993, involving 10 training institutions and

194 trainees from 52 countries. It also organized 25 study tours during the same period. Singapore offered 14 training courses, while Thailand reported hosting training/orientation for 3,000 trainees from developing countries on a yearly basis. Myanmar participated in 17 training courses provided mainly by China and Indonesia. From July 1992 to February 1994, Indonesia offered 50 training programmes/study tours in which a total of 544 trainees from 61 developing countries participated. Five of the training programmes promoted a new scheme, entitled "Self-propelling growth scheme", for which Indonesia organized two international expert group meetings in April and September 1993. China offered 19 training courses in 1993 and is in the process of implementing an additional 12 courses in 1994. The courses cover a wide range of areas, including health care for women and children, acupuncture, agricultural machinery, rice cultivation, biogas technology, small hydropower and meat processing.

21. Workshops have also been organized or planned by a number of countries with the support of the Special Unit for TCDC, including Cuba, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Turkey and the Republic of Moldova, covering such areas as the reconditioning of spare parts, small-scale photography in urban planning, medicinal plants and trade.

22. Many countries indicated that they have bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with other developing countries, involving training, cooperation and the exchange of technical, cultural, economic and scientific experience in different sectors. For example, Turkey indicated that since 1988 it has signed 344 bilateral cooperation agreements and has implemented 129 of them. Pakistan reported that as a result of a TCDC capacities and needs-matching exercise in the field of civil air transport, held in Karachi in 1993, in which 28 developing countries participated, 225 agreements have been signed. Colombia has signed some 36 bilateral and multilateral agreements with a number of countries, including Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Argentina. It is in the process of implementing a number of activities in various sectors, such as energy, tourism, industrial development and health. It is also negotiating similar agreements with the countries of the Maghreb region in North Africa and the Government of Nigeria.

National policies, institutional framework and support for TCDC

23. The overwhelming majority of developing countries have expressed support for increasing the use of TCDC modality. However, it is not yet established from the information received how many countries have adopted clearly stated national policies to ensure the increased use of the TCDC modality.

24. Almost all the responding countries have national TCDC focal points in place. Kyrgyzstan, the Sudan, Senegal and Togo have recently appointed new national focal points. The Philippines has created a technical cooperation council that will facilitate policy coordination. It has been pointed out, however, that the effectiveness of the national focal points continues to be limited due to a number of factors, including the absence of a clear national policy on TCDC and a lack of authority and finance. The need to strengthen national focal points and coordination mechanism has been reiterated.

25. Although several countries indicated having increased allocations for TCDC activities, the inadequacy of finance for TCDC activities has frequently been cited as one of the major constraints to the increased use of the modality.

2. Organizations and agencies of the United Nations system (other than UNDP)

26. Most of the organizations and agencies that responded stated that they have increased their efforts for the promotion and use of TCDC modality in the implementation of technical cooperation activities by instituting policy changes and mobilizing resources for both promotional and operational activities.

Policies and measures on TCDC

27. Several organizations and agencies have extensively assessed their policies and activities and have taken specific measures to strengthen their policies for the application of TCDC; some of them have issued circulars, handbooks and guidelines on the application of TCDC, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 1992, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 1993 and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1994.

28. The Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat sponsored the Thirteenth Biennial Meeting of National Recruitment Services, held in Cairo in March-April 1993, which focused on capacity-building activities and on the role of the Department in that regard. The meeting adopted the Cairo Plan of Action, which was further endorsed in June 1993 by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its decision 93/30. The Plan strongly recommended that capacity-building activities include preparatory needs assessments missions, training seminars and workshops, advisory missions by specialists on project personnel systems or other facets to the management and fellowship administration. As a follow-up, an interregional capacity-building workshop was held in Beijing in May 1993, with participants from Asia and the Pacific developing countries, focusing on programme management and human resources development, with an emphasis on the promotion of TCDC.

29. FAO reported that measures for promoting the use of TCDC are discussed during two-week orientation seminars on its programmes and procedures held twice a year for national project directors. Participants during the last two years have included 110 national project directors, 11 government officials and 36 country-level programme staff members of FAO and UNDP. The TCDC modality is also being incorporated in seminars on project formulation, implementation, evaluation and monitoring in field offices. Eighty participants attended presentations on TCDC in regional seminars held in Kuala Lumpur in 1992 and in Cairo in 1993.

30. After a comprehensive review, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is in the process of strengthening its field structure with subregional multidisciplinary technical advisory teams (MDTs) who are expected to increase their interaction with local institutions and make greater use of local experience and expertise.

31. WHO has established and/or strengthened focal points for TCDC in the various regions and at headquarters. An approach designed to integrate TCDC more fully into the health-for-all activities of developing countries, supported by WHO, was reviewed at a joint UNDP/WHO interregional consultation in February 1993.

32. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) reported that its regional advisers are promoting TCDC and that its Executive Council approved a draft resolution on TCDC in February 1994. That resolution will be submitted to the Twenty-first UPU Congress for approval in August/September 1994.

33. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) reported that it has been supportive of the objectives of resolution 1992/41 through its permanent programmes for development cooperation for industrial property and copyright. The World Food Programme (WFP) is presently reviewing its policies, objectives and strategies and is in the process of presenting a policy paper to its governing body, the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, at its May 1994 session. The paper proposes that WFP seek to maximize the benefits to developing countries in all of its work and outlines specific mechanisms for doing so. In addition, WFP has increased the delegated authority of its country directors, which will allow better opportunities for recruiting local experts, making local purchases and increasing cooperation with local non-governmental organizations.

34. TCDC focal points are already in place within most agencies and they conduct consultations and coordinate efforts through focal points meetings of the United Nations development system, such as those held through the auspices of the Special Unit for TCDC in New York and Geneva in 1992 and 1993.

Promotional/operational activities

35. The responding organizations and agencies reported supporting a number of activities since the adoption of Council resolution 1992/41.

36. For the period January 1993 to January 1994, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) reported implementing more than 80 promotional and 33 operational activities financed from extrabudgetary resources. The promotional activities supported the participation of developing countries of the region in seminars, study visits, training workshops, and bilateral and multilateral exchanges of experience. The operational activities aimed at enhancing the human resources of the participating countries in a wide range of areas, including agriculture, environment, human settlements, natural resources, population, rural development, social development, statistics, telecommunications, trade promotion and women in development. Some of those activities have already been reported upon by the countries themselves.

37. WHO stated that it was actively promoting TCDC in the health sector. Examples of its activities include the provision of fellowships for African trainees/trainers, the completion of an intercountry evaluation by the Expanded Programme on Immunization and Maternal and Child Health, and the organization of an International Conference on Community Health in Africa in Brazzaville in September 1992. In addition, about US$ 2.7 million (or 1.7 per cent of the

1992-1993 regular budget) were allocated for support to a number of technical cooperation activities in the Americas. In addition, the Governments of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico have, over the years, undertaken joint immunization activities, epidemiological surveillance, antimalarial action and cholera control. UNFPA recently approved a project to support the sharing of family planning experience between Indonesia and other countries of Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) indicated that its activities emphasize training primarily in developing countries and during the 1992-1993 period about 600 participants world wide were trained in the areas of improving statistics and data on women.

38. Under its Voluntary Cooperation Programme (VCP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) approved $70,000 for 1993 for expert missions from developing countries and over $400,000 for equipment and services from them.

39. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) reported that it continues to mobilize resources to increase support to ECDC/TCDC activities, in particular through the Industrial Development Fund (IDF) and other extrabudgetary resources. It also reported increasing its use of the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation, including the technical cooperation component of the Second Industrial Development Decade in Africa (IDDA) for ECDC/TCDC activities. In 1993, it secured approval for two significant projects under multi-donor financing for leather and footwear industry in Africa and tannery wastes treatment in eight countries in South-East Asia. About 30 promotional activities were also implemented by UNIDO, for example, between India and East African countries in agro-based industry and small-scale industry, and between China and Viet Nam in the machine-tool industry. A workshop in telecommunications software and technologies, held in China, resulted in the signing of 40 working agreements involving joint venture, expert services, the transfer of technology, equipment delivery and training. Similarly, 30 cooperation agreements were concluded in a meeting held in Guatemala on the industrial processing of medicinal plants.

40. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that it has mobilized resources from developing countries for use in other developing countries, such as the G-24 Trust Fund for studies on monetary and financial issues. In addition, it supported the organization of an investment round table in Uzbekistan in March 1994, as a result of which two Asian transnational corporations from India and Pakistan undertake feasibility studies and the Governments of the two countries have committed themselves to establishing technical cooperation and training programmes with Uzbekistan.

41. The Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat reported supporting TCDC activities under the United Nations regular programme funding, primarily through workshops, seminars, and training programmes. For example, activities mounted in 1993 included workshops and training in the following areas: mining and environment in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Zambia, September-October); environment management in mining for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, in cooperation with Germany (Namibia, September); guidelines for the development of small- and medium-scale mining

(Zimbabwe, February); computer applications for groundwater assessment and management (Thailand, January), in cooperation with ESCAP; the strengthening of foreign ministries in transition and TCDC Consultations (Malta, June), in cooperation with UNDP; the macro-economic impact of public investment in the Senegal River Valley (Mali, November); public expenditures policies (Honduras, December); and micro-economic policy reform during transition (Mongolia, September), which was jointly sponsored with the UNDP Special Unit for TCDC. Also in collaboration with the Special Unit for TCDC, the Department issued in 1993 "Guidelines for island developing countries in planning for sustainable development", based on joint workshops organized in 1992 on the same topic. A similar cooperative activity was the assessment of the capacities and needs of foreign ministries in transition of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, the Baltic States and the Balkan States, an assessment which served as the basis for the 1993 Workshop on the Strengthening of Foreign Ministries in Transition and TCDC Consultations, held in Malta. There has been an increasingly close collaboration and complementarity of efforts and resources between the Special Unit for TCDC and the Department. In addition, the Department participated in the various regional TCDC national focal point meetings. The Department also reported that the TCDC modality has been used in the implementation of a number of national and regional projects that it had executed.

42. WIPO has indicated supporting TCDC through its regional and subregional meetings, which have often led to cooperative arrangements, such as the standardization of administrative procedures, the establishment of commonly accessible databases and joint programming exercises among developing countries.

43. WFP reported that it has been collaborating with local non-governmental organizations for project identification, beneficiary targeting and implementation. During 1993, it worked with about 300 non-governmental organizations for both emergency and development projects. Under its training programme, in 1993 a total of nearly 6,000 counterpart staff participated in such programmes as project identification and planning, food management, emergency procedures and management, project management, and financial and office management. With regard to procurement, WFP stated that in 1993, 61 per cent of the food it bought (for a total of $262 million) came from developing countries and $136 million was spent on non-food items and services in those countries.

44. The transfer to national programmes of some of the research and training initiatives that are currently the responsibility of international centres is one of the innovative approaches to TCDC that the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has adopted in order to strengthen the capabilities of national agricultural research systems (NARS) IFAD is specifically promoting a collaborative initiative through the International Centre for Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT) (Grant No. 201), involving the decentralization of some of the CIMMYT research and training responsibilities, which would devolve to the National Agricultural Technology Institute (INTA) of Argentina. A similar effort is being pursued under IFAD TAG 267-IRRI (International Rice Research Institute), involving the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in rice farming systems research. IFAD is planning to further support such initiatives, extending the concept to other strong NARS

(in Brazil for maize, in Egypt for semi-chemicals research on desert locust control; and in Malaysia and Indonesia for research on bamboo and rattan, tissue culture research etc.).

45. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has been utilizing TCDC through its regional, sub-regional and interregional activities. A notable example is its Urban Management Programme, which has set up a coordinated programme of capacity-building and exchange of skills of regional networks and communities and institutions. The programme has a decentralized structure, with offices in Quito (Latin America and the Caribbean), Accra (Africa), Cairo (Arab States) and Kuala Lumpur (Asia and the Pacific) that became fully operational in 1993. In addition, Habitat has developed long-term attachments of national personnel among Caribbean countries and has supported study tours among developing countries.

46. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reported that it has continued to promote TCDC while putting greater emphasis on its application in projects and project-related activities. Specifically, in 1993 it implemented some 25 activities, including a training programme on digital technology between Senegal and Burkina Faso; the improvement of computerized telephone billing systems between Malaysia and Pakistan; and a manpower planning workshop (MANPLAN) in El Salvador and Bolivia.

Utilization of national expertise/consultants

47. Increased use of capacities of and consultants from developing countries has been reported by many agencies.

48. ESCAP indicated that for 1993, out of a total of 425 consulting services, 226 consultants and 41 contractors were from developing countries, representing 62 per cent of the total. Several institutions from developing countries, including China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Egypt and Sri Lanka, have been utilized to provide training for other developing country participants under the auspices of TCDC.

49. UNIDO indicated that more than 500 experts were recruited from Egypt, Hungary, India, Poland, Romania and the Syrian Arab Republic to provide technical services to Egypt, Libya and Nigeria in the areas of cement and petrochemicals. The World Bank stated that consulting services from developing countries other than the borrowing countries amounted to $66 million and $81 million for the financial years 1991 and 1992 respectively. When consulting services from borrowing countries are included, those numbers increase to $268 and $293 respectively. UNFPA has established a national consultants' roster database.

50. UNCTAD reported that it has recruited a significant number of experts/consultants from developing countries and has also utilized the services of developing country institutions in such areas as writing, programming, training and installing UNCTAD software in other developing countries. WFP stated that its utilization of local expertise for project identification, appraisal or technical review is increasing. For 1993, the percentage of

persons recruited from developing countries was 25 and for 1994 the figure to date is 40 per cent. Furthermore it is recruiting more experts locally or from neighbouring countries, including subcontracting to local universities and institutions. WIPO reported that during 1992 and 1993, 165 nationals of 33 developing countries, including 28 from four regional organizations, were used as experts for missions to other developing countries or as speakers in WIPO seminars or meetings.

51. Habitat, as part of its regular programme and its operational activities, has developed a modality of horizontal exchange of experiences among project personnel in general and among national experts in particular. For instance, assistance to Nicaragua from a national expert from Bolivia in setting up an urban cadastral system has led, in 1993, to a major financing, as cost-sharing to UNDP IPF, from the Government of Sweden.

52. Regarding training, the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat has been placing over 50 per cent of its fellowships in institutions of developing countries, as its predecessors have done in previous years.

3. United Nations Development Programme

53. The Special Unit for TCDC has been vigorously encouraging the promotion and application of TCDC in the implementation of technical cooperation activities. Due to the considerable promotional work that has been done by the Special Unit for TCDC, with cooperation of the regional bureaux, there is widespread awareness of Council resolution 1992/41, as well as appreciation of its implications.

54. Following the adoption of Council resolution 1992/41, the text was forwarded to all the developing countries and to the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system with a letter from the Administrator of UNDP outlining the implications of the resolution and urging its implementation.

55. The Administrator followed up the initial distribution of the text of the resolution by preparing and disseminating throughout the developing countries and the development system, a special booklet entitled "Major decisions on TCDC in 1992-1993", in which the need for concerted efforts to implement the resolution was underscored.

56. The promotional work of the Special Unit during the last two years has covered a broad spectrum, including the dissemination of information, a greatly increased volume of training and sensitization on TCDC, and continued publication of Cooperation South magazine. In addition, a complete restructuring of the TCDC-INRES (Information Referral System) has been carried out, including the updating of data on more than 90 per cent of the 4,400 registered institutions in INRES and the creation and release of new, easier to use versions of the INRES software suitable for wide distribution throughout the developing countries and the development system.

57. The promotional campaign continued with the organization of a series of regional and national meetings for the national focal points. The regional meetings were held for the Arab States in Syria (August 1992), for Africa in Ethiopia (February 1993), for East European and CIS countries in Turkey (July 1993) and for Asia and the Pacific in Sri Lanka (April 1994). The meetings aimed at (a) bringing together the focal points to exchange experiences on the promotion of TCDC at the national level; (b) strengthening their functions; and (c) briefing them on developments, in particular Council resolution 1992/41 and the technical cooperation for developing countries strategy for the 1990s.

58. During the reporting period, a number of workshops and capacities- and needs-matching activities were completed, in such areas as medicinal plants, the small and medium enterprise "SPARK" programme of China, economic reform, environment, poverty alleviation, and resource mobilization through aid coordination and management. With the support of the Special Unit, three countries - Pakistan, Uganda and Nigeria - have completed capacities - and needs-matching exercises in the important sectors of civil aviation; industrial services and institutions for the private sector; and agriculture, science and technology.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

59. The information contained in the present report is an interim assessment of actions taken by Governments and the organizations and agencies of the United Nations development system during the last one and a half years. A comprehensive report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1996 will provide a more detailed analysis of the actions taken by all parties, since by that time four years will have elapsed since the adoption of Council resolution 1992/41.

60. A recommendation that has again emerged from the current assessment is the need to adopt clear national policies on the wide application of TCDC and the importance of strengthening TCDC focal points. Developing countries may find it useful to ensure that their national policies state clearly that first consideration be given to the use of the TCDC modality in the implementation of their programmes and projects; they may also find it useful to censure that their national TCDC focal points are strengthened.